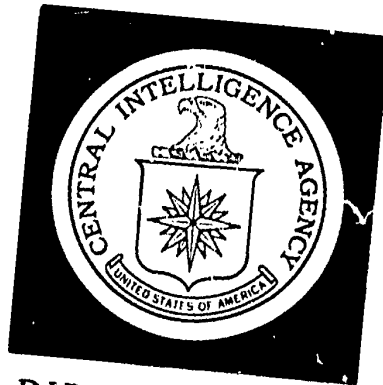


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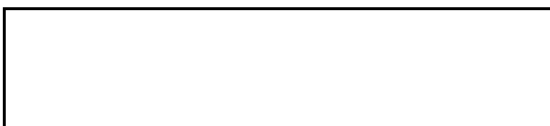
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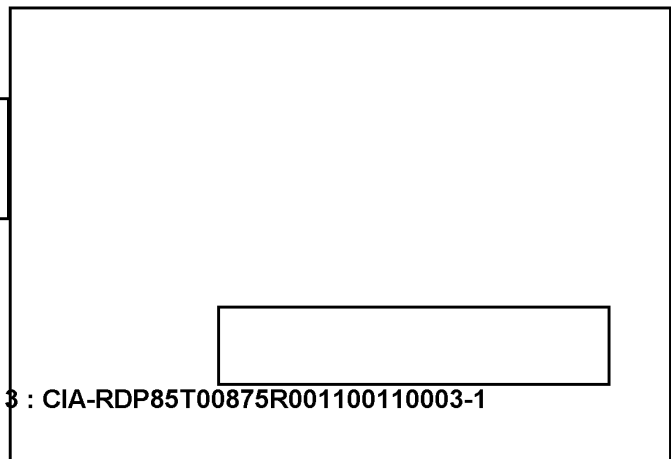
India Seeks Support in Growing Crisis with Pakistan

State Department review completed

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
2 August 1971

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

India Seeks Support in Growing Crisis with Pakistan

Introduction

Since fighting began in East Bengal on 25 March and East Pakistani refugees in massive numbers began crossing the border into West Bengal and other states on India's northeastern frontier, Prime Minister Gandhi's message to the world has been remarkably consistent--either the powers ensure that Pakistan re-establishes stability in East Bengal, or India will use force to protect its vital interests. The message has been couched in a variety of nicely turned diplomatic phrases, hedged by various qualifications and conditions, but stripped down it is an outright threat to initiate hostilities on the subcontinent.

Two basic concerns are responsible for the Indian attitude. The first--which is the more highly publicized but probably less important in its long-range implications for the government itself--is the fear that India will not be able to cope with the refugees. Some seven million Pakistanis have crossed the border already, and the influx is continuing. The refugees pose very serious economic, political, health, administrative, security, and communal problems. The magnitude of the refugee relief task cannot be over-emphasized, but the fact remains that India is managing and, at least in the short run, will be able

Note: This memorandum was prepared by the Office of Current Intelligence and was coordinated within CIA.

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to continue to do so. If the refugee flow should cease, India, with promised foreign aid, would probably be able to absorb most of the refugees. This is, however, an unpalatable solution to the refugee situation and, combined with other dangers stemming from the Pakistani civil war, may prove politically unacceptable. Moreover, as long as there are famine conditions--already noticeable in parts of East Pakistan--the refugee flow will continue.

The second, and more important, of the Indian concerns is the fear that a radical left regime eventually will emerge on the borders of West Bengal--India's most unstable state. Unless Pakistani President Yahya Khan is able to install a government in East Bengal that is acceptable to most of the Bengali people, the Indians foresee a prolonged period of disorder on their eastern borders. Under such circumstances, the moderate East Bengali leaders of the Awami League--who are temperamentally and physically unprepared to lead an armed resistance movement--would probably be succeeded by radical leaders, who are already proving to be better organized and more effective in carrying out guerrilla operations than the moderates. It is essentially to prevent the emergence of an East Pakistan that it fears may look to Peking and pose a security problem in West Bengal and other sensitive northeastern border states that India may ultimately decide to invade East Pakistan.

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Early Response

1. The Indian Government's first public response to the events unfolding in East Pakistan following the army crackdown on 25 March was to condemn the ferocity of the army's attack while expressing humanitarian concern for the victims. Indian policy makers, in general, avoided describing the events in East Pakistan in emotional terms, and Foreign Minister Swaran Singh turned in a markedly restrained performance in discussing the developing situation before the Indian parliament on 26 and 27 March.

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some Indian officials expressed concern that the East Pakistani secessionists would arouse similar strivings for autonomy among dissidents in West Bengal. But, on the whole, the Indian line at that time was low-keyed.

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2. The Indians wasted little time, however, in making their anxiety known to the international community. At the United Nations, the Indian representatives tried, at first unsuccessfully, to persuade Secretary General U Thant to take action that would focus the pressure of world opinion on Pakistan and force it to cease its repressive action in East Bengal.

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A week later, T. N. Kaul, the Indian foreign secretary, was expressing to US Embassy officials his concern that a prolonged struggle in "Bangla Desh" (Bengal Nation, the rebel term for East Bengal) would result in the radicalization of the Bengali leadership.

3. From the outset, the Indians tried to coordinate their moves closely with the Soviet Union

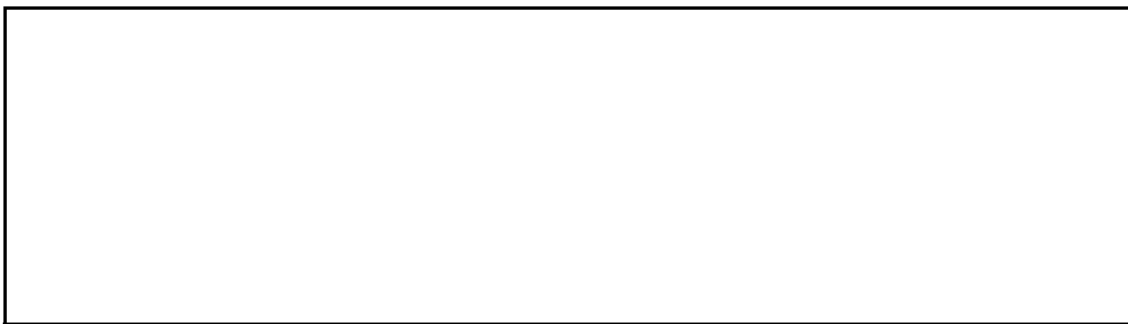
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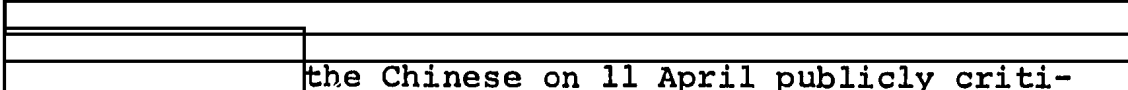
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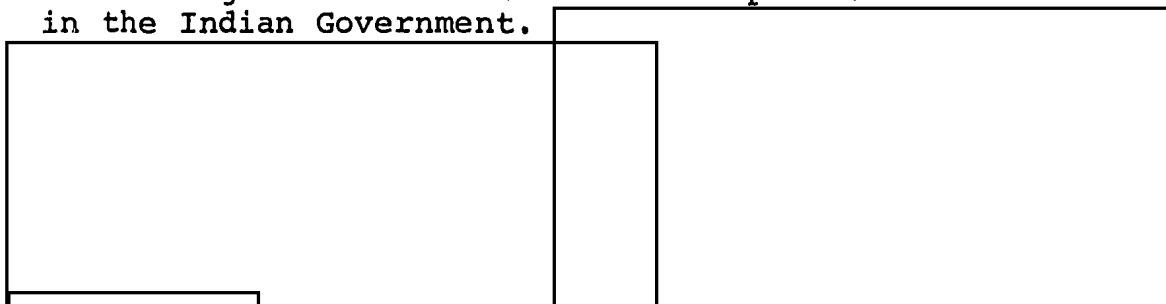
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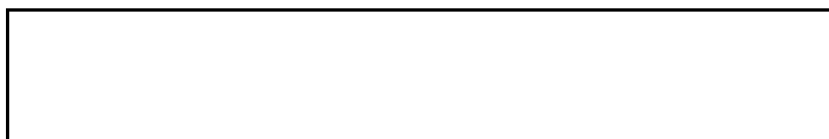
the Chinese on 11 April publicly criticized the Soviets for laying all blame on the West Pakistanis. Peking even accused the US and the USSR of colluding with India to intervene in Pakistan's internal affairs. The Chinese warned that "anyone" (read India) who interfered in the internal affairs of another country "would never come to a good end" and affirmed their support for the Pakistani Government's "just struggle to safe guard state sovereignty against foreign aggression." The next day the Pakistanis released a letter from Premier Chou En-lai assuring President Yahya of Chinese support "should Indian expansionsists launch an aggression in Pakistan."

5. In the meantime, leaders of the Awami League had reached India along with the other refugees, and a "free government of Bangla Desh" was established with the help of the Indians. Indian public opinion favored immediate recognition of this government, but China's statements in support of Pakistan had had an unsettling effect in New Delhi and opinion was divided in the Indian Government.

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The government's concern with the anti-Indian (as opposed to anti-Bengali) content of the



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Chinese pronouncements was sufficient, however, to cause the Indians to move with great caution on the issue of early recognition. [REDACTED]

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Refugee Influx Intensifies Pressure on Indian Government

6. By mid-April, with the Pakistani Army rampaging through East Pakistan and almost a million refugees flooding across India's borders, it was apparent that the Russian overtures had failed. Civil administration in the Indian border areas began to collapse under the pressures of the refugee influx, and the government intensified its efforts to "internationalize" the problem. The Indians argued that the refugees had turned an internal conflict into an international problem and that the international community therefore had a responsibility to assume much of the burden of refugee relief.

7. Accordingly, help in meeting the costs of refugee relief gained increasing attention from Indian policy makers during late April to mid-May--although at no time did New Delhi cease trying to persuade the major powers to force Pakistan to reach a political settlement with the Bengalis. During this period the Indians raised the humanitarian issue in the UN's Economic and Social Council and succeeded in prevailing upon Secretary General Thant to make an appeal for international help to meet the costs of caring for the refugees. [REDACTED]

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during this period, Indian Embassy officers in Washington urgently appealed to the State Department for US involvement in the East Pakistani situation and spoke of possibly taking the problem to the UN Security Council. In most of the major world capitals Indian diplomats launched a campaign that reiterated their concern over the economic repercussions of refugee relief, hinted at Mrs. Gandhi's difficulties in containing pro - Bangla Desh hawks, expressed fear that extremists would come to power in East Pakistan if the crisis were prolonged, and appealed for help in impressing the Pakistani leaders with the dangers of their present course. In a note dated 14 May, the Indian Government put the Pakistanis on notice that it would demand "full satisfaction" for the financial and other burdens imposed by the refugees, and insisted that the Pakistani Army "desist immediately from its terrorizing activities."

8. Coincident with their approach to the major powers, the Indians were putting out tentative feelers toward the Muslim world. They were particularly concerned over the intentions of Iran and Turkey, which had traditionally sided with Pakistan. Most of the responses from the Muslim countries were negative, and on 13 May Indian Foreign Ministry officials admitted to US Embassy officers in New Delhi that the Arab embassies could talk only of preserving the unity of Pakistan or of their solidarity with their Muslim brothers.

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[REDACTED] New Delhi announced that high-level cabinet ministers would travel to foreign capitals to explain India's views. Foreign Minister Swaran Singh, would visit the USSR, the US, France, Germany, Canada, and the UK. Prime Minister Gandhi, in addressing opposition politicians on 25 May, hinted at unilateral military action, although she did not use those precise words, and on 27 May Foreign Secretary Kaul told US Ambassador Keating that India did not want to escalate the situation but that unless "influence and pressure" were exercised on Pakistan "by countries like yours," India's growing frustrations in coping with the refugee problem could lead to serious trouble. For the first time, a top Indian official expressed the view that a political solution in East Pakistan could be found only by dealing with the charismatic Bengali leader Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his Awami League. This demand for a specific solution to the Pakistani crisis has caused increased bitterness in Islamabad toward India's "interference" in Pakistani internal affairs.

The Diplomatic Offensive

14. The month of June saw the high point of Indian diplomacy on a world-wide basis. In addition to Foreign Minister Singh, who began his foreign tour early in the month [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Indian diplomatic missions, headed by cabinet ministers, visited an impressive number of European, African, and Middle Eastern countries as well as

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Canada and the US. Although the language varied somewhat according to the capital, the message on the whole was consistent, and generally restrained.

15. Narayan, reflecting Indian public opinion more than hard government policy, insisted that nothing less than independence for Bangla Desh was acceptable. Swaran Singh was probably nearer to the government's position when he asserted that India was simply seeking a "political solution" that would restore peace in East Bengal and allow the refugees to go home. The Indians, according to Singh, believed an independent Bangla Desh would probably emerge in time, but stated that it was a matter for the Pakistanis to decide. The fact remained, he pointed out, that the refugees would not return unless they had confidence that their security would be assured, and as long as the Pakistani Army continued its violent and repressive policies in East Bengal, confidence would not be restored. Somehow, the fighting in East Pakistan must be stopped.

16. The Indian emissaries dwelt at length on the growing problems the presence of the refugees caused for their country, not the least of which was fear that Mrs. Gandhi would be forced to divert increasing amounts of promised development expenditures to refugee relief. With elections coming up in ten states by February 1972, this was a serious political liability. The refugees also posed a threat to Hindu-Muslim relations, and any massive refugee-connected flare-up of communal violence would work against the Ruling Congress Party in the coming elections. This, plus concern for the security of the sensitive northeastern frontier region and fears for stability in West Bengal, added to a situation that was already becoming intolerable.

17. The Indians could see only one way in which the international community could hope to influence the situation and return a measure of stability to the sub-continent. The civil war had caused a severe drain on Pakistan's limited economic resources, and the country now needed substantial amounts of foreign aid. Therefore, the Indians argued, economic assistance should be sold to Pakistan at the price of restoring stability in East Bengal.

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18. Aid, according to the Indians, was the only weapon that could force a solution; and, as Foreign Minister Singh explained to US Ambassador Bush at the United Nations, India was interested in solutions, "not palliatives." For this reason, the diplomatic offensive played requests for refugee assistance in low key. Refugee relief aid would be welcomed, but the Indians saw it basically as of short-run help, devoid of long-term significance.

19. In Washington, Swaran Singh pressed the point that time might be running out; he wondered how long India could be expected to pursue an essentially reactive policy. Narayan asked Assistant Secretary of State Sisco, "How long can India be expected to be a silent spectator to events?" In Paris, Singh said that unless the international community took positive action, "India would be obligated to act to correct the state of things." Canadian officials received the impression that Singh's trip was only to set the stage for a future military move. Indeed, at home, influential Indian editorial writers and political leaders were pressing Mrs. Gandhi to "carve out" an area in Bangla Desh to settle the growing number of refugees. At no point during his tour, however, did Singh set a time limit on Indian patience.

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20. The traveling Indian statemen were generally well received. Even in the Muslim world, they were given a courteous and--in the case of Amman and Tehran--a fairly extensive hearing. (The Shah subsequently offered to mediate between India and Pakistan, but Mrs. Gandhi turned him down. King Husayn also promised to intercede with Yahya). Ceylon's prime minister, herself facing the threat of further insurgency, offered her good offices to mediate the Indo-Pakistani problem. In response to a letter received from Mrs. Gandhi, Philippine President Marcos also began to consider ways in which he could be "helpful." But, on the whole, the international response to the Indian offensive was not encouraging.

21. Several governments promised additional contributions for refugee relief, and most expressed the rather bland "hope" that peace would eventually be restored. The Aid Pakistan Consortium--composed of the developed Western nations and Japan plus the IBRD--had decided in mid-June not to hold a pledging session for Pakistan until autumn at the earliest. This means that no new consortium projects will be begun in Pakistan for some months at least. Most countries in a position to exert significant economic pressure on Pakistan argued, however, that pipeline aid should be continued. They thought that cutting off aid that had already been extended would be counterproductive and would result in denying them leverage in Islamabad.

22. On his return to India, Swaran Singh claimed that the results of his trip were all he could have hoped for--he had obtained general commitments to work for a speedy political settlement in East Bengal. Nevertheless, it is likely that the diplomatic offensive served primarily to increase Indian frustrations. No country promised to use the kind of strong economic pressure on Pakistan that India felt was required.

23. The US had promised to suspend new economic assistance programs to Pakistan and to stop sales of "non-lethal" military items as of 25 March, but on his return to India Singh discovered that no embargo had been levied against the shipment of equipment that had already been turned over to Pakistani Government agents. Revelations that ships were to sail with such cargos enraged Indian opinion against the US and have done much to heighten India's sense of isolation. Swaran Singh admitted that he did not expect the United Nations to play a dynamic role. Also on the negative side of the ledger was the basically pro-Pakistan position of the Arabs--and particularly the UAR, where all indications pointed to a further deterioration in relations with India. India had been urged in many capitals to continue following a "moderate" course, and Singh was warned that the use of force was unacceptable. To make matters worse, border clashes on the Indian-Pakistani frontier intensified during the period,

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the refugee count rose to six million, [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] In the meantime, domestic pressure on Prime Minister Gandhi to initiate "unilateral military action" to solve the Bengali problem was building and gaining adherents from among top government officials.

A Friend in Need...

24. In their high-level conversations with Singh, the Soviets apparently gave the impression that they shared the Indian analysis of the probable outcome of events in East Bengal. Both countries fear that pro-Peking extremists might eventually gain control unless a solid political solution, acceptable to the Bengalis is achieved. The Soviets, however, have apparently not yet given up hope that the West Pakistanis will move to accommodate the East.

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27. Moreover, although Prime Minister Gandhi has described the international community's refugee aid commitments--which amounted to some \$125 million in mid-July--as practically next to nothing, few foreign donors have indicated that they intend any significant step up in commitments. Some probably feel that India could absorb most of the refugees. In playing down relief in connection with its drive to impress foreign capitals with the need to exert economic pressure on Pakistan, the Indians may have, inadvertently, made the refugee issue a less credible justification for starting a war. Indian thinking, no doubt, takes this development into consideration and Prime Minister Gandhi therefore would now expect a less favorable international reaction to an Indian initiated war.

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Indian concerns about the long-range implications of the refugee situation are rising, however, and the Indians have begun to emphasize the issue again.

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Aftermath of Diplomacy

29. The pace of Indian diplomatic activity has slowed since June. Indian opinion has been embittered by reports that French, and even Soviet arms, as well as US military equipment, were still in the pipeline to Pakistan despite assurances to the contrary. On 28 July, Foreign Minister Singh told the Indian parliament that, at present, his government does not contemplate raising the Bangla Desh issue before the UN Security Council and, on the same day, maintaining that there was no shortage of Indian personnel to handle the refugee influx, the government of the state of West Bengal ordered all foreign personnel to leave the refugee areas as soon as possible--"preferably within two days." The ban, presumably directed by Mrs. Gandhi, was expected to be soon extended to refugee areas in other states.

30. During the diplomatic lull, the Soviet paper Izvestiya has called for a "peaceful" solution to current Indo-Pakistani problems and has endorsed Mrs. Gandhi's latest rebuff to war advocates in India. Izvestiya raised the possibility of a Tashkent-like meeting between Prime Minister Gandhi and President Yahya, but the Indians have held to their old position that Pakistan's basic problem is not with India but with the people of East Bengal. In line with this position the Indians have been unenthusiastic over UN Secretary General Thant's suggestion that a limited number of refugee observers be stationed along the border in India and Pakistan. "Posting a few UN observers...will not stop Pakistani Army atrocities," according to T. N. Kaul, and "would create a misleading facade" by equating India with Pakistan.

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31. It is unlikely that a new diplomatic offensive will be launched. Although no definite negatives were uncovered, India received little in the way of solid support from the international community. Some countries might cut off economic aid to

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New Delhi should India initiate hostilities, but the Indians believe that the USSR would not be among them. The diplomatic offensive cleared the Indian slate--the world was put on notice and has not responded adequately in the Indian view.

32. On 12 July, Indian Defense Minister Ram said that the Pakistani liberation forces were gaining in expertise and would eventually succeed in establishing "Bangla Desh." Eight days later Swaran Singh warned Pakistan that the guerrilla activity would increase unless President Yahya agreed to a settlement with the "elected representatives of the people of Bangla Desh."

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34. In the meantime, conditions inside East Pakistan are continuing to deteriorate. The extremists appear to be gradually becoming more prominent in the guerilla movement, and refugees are continuing to stream into India.

35. The Indians have set no time limit on their patience, but they have scheduled military maneuvers in eastern India in late September or early October.

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Bengal's decision to ban foreigners from refugee areas represents a further hardening of the Indian position. Taken in conjunction with India's refusal to permit UN personnel to be stationed along the border with East Pakistan, it reflects the government's sensitivity to the presence of outsiders in an area where military operations are under way or contemplated.

36. Aside from New Delhi's fear of potential Chinese reactions, no foreign country has threatened counteraction strong enough to deter Indian policy makers should they decide to initiate hostilities against Pakistan. The indications are, however, that for the time being they are pinning their hopes on the Bengali liberation forces. In the meantime, the military is being kept in readiness, and should conditions in East Pakistan continue to develop counter to Indian interests, Prime Minister Gandhi is prepared to order the troops into battle.